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ABSTRACT

This document presents the executive summary of an evaluation of Library Power, a program of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund to enhance and elevate the role of libraries in public schools. The report begins with an examination of Library Power's core components (collection development, facilities refurbishing, flexible scheduling, collaborative planning, and professional development) and the way each one reinforces the other, contributing to new professional relationships and practices in participating schools. It continues with a delineation of the ways in which Library Power teams of librarians, teachers, and principals in each school adopted these core elements and practices of the program and devised ways to weave them together into a fabric that was stronger than any of the initiative's single threads. Library Power's contributions to curriculum, instruction, and professional collegiality are examined. Lessons learned are discussed related to new and sustained funding, outside support, leadership, professional development, and compatible policies. Key findings are summarized for dilemmas of reform in the areas of competing demands, varying capacity for improving teaching, learning, and equity. (MES)

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ED 438 846

Executive Summary:

Findings from the Evaluation of the National Library Power Program

An initiative of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund

Conducted by the University of Wisconsin at Madison School of Library and Information Studies and School of Education

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■ This document summarizes the findings of the final report of the Library Power Evaluation, prepared by Douglas Zweizig, Dianne McAfee Hopkins with Norman Webb and Gary Wehlage. The summary was prepared by Anne Wheelock, an education writer, researcher and policy analyst who served as a case study researcher for the Library Power Evaluation.

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I. Introduction

More than a decade ago, the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund began a program to enhance and elevate the role of libraries in public schools. Our work flowed from a new, bolder vision of what these libraries should look like, what services they should offer and how they should be used. We saw them as brightly painted, warm and welcoming places. We anticipated their shelves brimming with up-to-date books and other relevant print and electronic learning materials, carefully selected by teams of librarians and teachers to closely match and supplement topics being studied in class. We imagined them operating on flexible schedules so students could visit whenever they needed to throughout the school day. Once inside, we expected to find students actively engaged reading books, doing research and working with their classmates – sometimes noisily – on interesting, challenging and academically rewarding projects. Finally, we hoped that as teachers and librarians became skilled at applying new practices for making best use of these enhanced educational resources, they would be demonstrating the true power of libraries to enrich teaching and learning.

Today, we are happy to report that vision – what we call Library Power – has been realized in hundreds of schools across the country, many of them in some the nation's poorest districts. No longer remote and removed from daily instructional activities, libraries in these schools are now at the center of teaching and learning, and in some places, at the center of schoolwide change. While we're gratified that our work has produced such impressive results, we still have one more goal to meet – and perhaps a more difficult one. That is to use the evidence of Library Power's success to persuade many more people, especially decision-makers in other schools, local communities, and at the state and federal levels, that libraries are essential to schools. This report is part of that effort. These findings from a four-year evaluation of the Library Power program, conducted by researchers from the University of Wisconsin's School of Library and Information Studies and School of Education, help make the case for additional and sustained investment in public school libraries.

To put this report in context, some history is helpful. In the late 1980s, a public advocacy group issued a study called "No Reading Aloud" that described the poor condition of library services in New York City's public schools. The study showed that large numbers of schools either had no libraries at all, or if they did, their facilities were often in poor shape. To our dismay, we discovered that the situation in New York was not unique. By and large, educators did not think public school libraries were essential to teaching and learning. Some even considered librarians and libraries expendable in lean budget years. Even in the best of times, many public school libraries, especially those in low-income communities, were inadequately funded, facilities were allowed to deteriorate and book collections to fall out of date.

Against this backdrop came a glimmer of hope. In 1988, the Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association (ALA), issued a publication called *Information Power* – a set of practices for improving the operation of school libraries and expanding their role in teaching and learning. Impressed by the vision put forward in *Information Power*, we used it to design Library Power. We also invited the ALA and the Public Education Network to help us implement the program.

Beginning in New York City in 1988, and continuing over the next 10 years, we and our partners successfully established Library Power programs in 700 schools in 19 communities nationwide. In partnership with appropriate school district personnel, each Library Power site was managed by a local education fund, a community-based organization that works to improve public education. Over the term of the program, grants for Library Power totaled more than $40 million, making it the largest private investment in school libraries in nearly 40 years. In addition, the Library Power sites raised $25 million from public and private sources in their communities. This money enabled participating schools to:

- Renovate their library space;
- Purchase new books and upgrade print and electronic collections; and
- Provide professional development programs for librarians, teachers and principals to learn how to work together to make the best of their new libraries.

In return for grants from the Fund, Library Power schools agreed to hire and pay the salaries of full-time librarians (sometimes called media specialists), keep the library open and accessible to everyone throughout the school day, allow teachers and librarians time to participate in professional development programs, and increase their spending for books, software and educational materials.

Because we wanted to learn what Library Power had achieved, and to be able to make an effective case for the important role libraries can play in supporting teaching and learning in schools, in 1994 we commissioned the University of Wisconsin to conduct an evaluation of the program. Over four years, evaluators surveyed librarians, principals and teachers about library staffing, materials, resources and scheduling. In addition, the evaluation examined how Library Power influenced the work librarians did with their teacher colleagues to promote new classroom practices.

This report details the evaluation's major findings, which are summarized below:

- **Improved collections:** Book collections in participating schools improved considerably and the titles in the library better reflected the subjects being studied in class.
- **Refurbished facilities:** Renovations enabled school libraries to accommodate more users and different kinds of activities, all taking place simultaneously – such as individual reading, groups working together and students using computers to research class projects.
- **Higher student traffic:** Implementation of flexible scheduling – letting students visit the library whenever they need to throughout the day instead of limiting use to regularly scheduled periods – resulted in more frequent visits to the library.
- **Greater instructional collaboration:** Librarians and teachers in participating schools collaborated on planning and designing instructional units, with librarians sometimes sharing responsibility for teaching.
- **Expanded professional skills:** By taking part in professional development programs, principals, teachers and librarians discovered new ways to integrate library and other information resources into teaching and learning.

These changes and others helped schools engage students in meaningful and educationally rich learning activities. Instead of being limited to classroom lectures and textbook assignments, students could explore topics in more depth by using the full range of library resources – books, CD ROMs and the internet.

We are heartened by these findings, and we are eager to see them widely shared, considered and discussed. They should be of particular importance to all schools, districts and groups committed to improving teaching and learning. They should be especially meaningful to those who are seeking ways to help students develop higher order thinking and critical analysis skills, and to those who believe young people should be active participants in their own learning. The findings should also be of interest to those who want to see schools focused on new opportunities for students to reach their highest possible level of achievement.

While 10 years may seem like a long time to invest in Library Power, the return on that investment is just beginning.

M. Christine DeVita
President
DeWitt Wallace-
Reader's Digest Fund
July 1999

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II. About this Study:

The longitudinal evaluation of Library Power began in the Fall of 1994 – coinciding with the third and final round of grants made as part of this initiative – and lasted through 1998. The evaluation captures the Library Power experience of schools entering Library Power under all three rounds of grant-making and reports data on a total of 456 schools.

Over the course of their work, evaluators made extensive use of survey and case studies. The evaluation draws on data from annual surveys from librarians in participating schools; from principals in those schools and from a representative sample of teachers from across the initiative; observational and interview data from longitudinal case studies done in 28 school buildings between 1995 and 1997; and data from activity logs that document the collaborative activities of teachers and librarians.

To examine changes resulting from the implementation of Library Power in participating schools, researchers:

- Conducted time series analyses, examining change from 1995-1997, including analyses examining change in relation to time spent in the program.
- Compared practice in Library Power schools with national norms using data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Schools and Staffing Survey.
- Triangulated findings by drawing on multiple data sources on the same phenomena.

In all, the Library Power evaluation presents data collected from over 1,000 teachers, 400 principals and 400 library media specialists. The Library Power evaluation is one of the largest applied research studies ever to examine the role school library media programs can play in supporting teaching and learning activities in schools.

More information about the evaluation design will be available in the forthcoming publication, *Lessons from Library Power: Enriching Teaching and Learning*, which will be published in Fall 1999 by Libraries Unlimited. For order information, write Libraries Unlimited, PO Box 6633, Engelwood, Colorado, 80155-633; call (800) 237-6124; or e-mail lubooks@lu.com.

III. Library Power: What the Program Accomplished and Lessons Learned

This report begins with an examination of Library Power's core components and the way each one reinforces the other, contributing to new professional relationships and practices in participating schools. It continues with a delineation of the ways in which Library Power teams of librarians, teachers and principals in each school adopted these core elements and practices of the program and devised ways to weave them together into a fabric that was stronger than any of the initiative's single threads.

Collection Development

From the beginning, Library Power sought to address the simple lack of resources in many school libraries, especially those in financially strapped districts. When school teams set out to assess the status of library collections, they quickly documented just how outmoded many collections were. In many districts, it was not unusual to find overall average copyright dates of 1968, with a large number of volumes dating from the 1950s. Not surprisingly, then, when surveyed early on in their Library Power experience, many librarians rated collection areas in schools as "less than adequate" in terms of currency and quality.

Two years later, improvements in collections were nearly universal. By 1997, librarians in participating schools rated many areas – including fiction, literature, biography, reference sources, science and technology, social sciences and picture books – as "better than adequate." The improvement in collection ratings can be seen clearly in Table 1 where ratings from a group of schools in their first year of their project (1995) are compared with ratings from the same schools in the third year (1997). Data from a national survey of schools from the 1993-94 school year, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), are provided for comparison.

Collections did not improve by magic. Rather, librarians and teachers, in cooperation with each school's Library Power team, worked systematically to fill gaps in the holdings. By involving teachers more closely in selecting these materials, librarians tailored new purchases more closely to schools' curriculum needs. Over two-thirds of the teachers surveyed across the initiative said that they were involved in the selection of materials. For many schools this was a new practice: 71% of the principals reported that collaboration between teachers and librarians in developing the collection did not exist in their schools before Library Power. Further, over half of the principals attributed the current collaboration to the existence of the Library Power project. The resulting, and more extensive, bank

Key Finding: Through Library Power, book collections in participating schools improved considerably and the titles in the library better reflected the subjects being studied in class. The resulting, and more extensive, bank of resources available for student learning gave teachers new impetus for using the library for instructional purposes.

■ Before Library Power, we had to go to three different public libraries to get the books we needed to teach our units. (Teacher, Library Power school)

Table 1:

Percentage of Librarians Rating Collection Areas as "Adequate" or "Excellent"

(Matched Librarian Surveys, Round Three only, 1995 & 1997)*

	Currentness			Quantity		
	SASS '93-'94 %	LP '95 %	LP '97 %	SASS '93-'94 %	LP '95 %	LP '97 %
Collection Area						
Reference	65	63	98	65	58	98
Science/Technology	54	48	95	55	36	94
Mathematics	40	31	72	38	23	59
Geography	52	44	94	53	39	87
History	63	55	89	60	49	84
Biography	66	67	98	68	61	97
Social Sciences	59	64	94	58	61	89
Fiction	79	78	95	77	73	92
Picture Books	72	82	96	70	71	91
Literature	64	64	85	64	47	80
Fine Arts	48	47	87	46	37	82
Foreign Language	25	20	61	22	5	48
Careers	36	36	68	36	29	63
Health	47	42	93	44	37	87
Total responding	**	64	63	**	64	63

*Source: Matched surveys from librarians entering Library Power in the 1994-1995 school year who were surveyed in Spring 1995 and 1997. **Data from the 1993-94 Schools and Staffing Survey are estimates for the 56,273 elementary schools in the United States having school library media centers.

of resources available to support student learning gave teachers new impetus for using the library for instructional purposes. By 1997, 85% of teachers in Library Power schools said that the collection now supported their needs and the needs of their students better than before the program began; in addition, 60% said they had increased their use of the collection in their instruction.

As one teacher reported, "[Before Library Power], you could go to the library and you might find what you needed, but with teachers involved in the selection of library materials, now you can go to the library and know you'll find what you need."

Steps to improve collections also provided opportunities for a range of individuals within and outside of schools to participate in library reform. For example, local education funds conducted book drives in the community and raised money for new purchases.

Separately, teachers and librarians worked together on grouping books by general topic areas and copyright dates, and weeding worn and out-of-date volumes from the shelves. Teachers and librarians also took the additional step of listing curriculum topics taught in each grade and matching new purchases to these topics. The better match between library resources and curriculum meant that circulation among students doubled and even tripled in some schools.

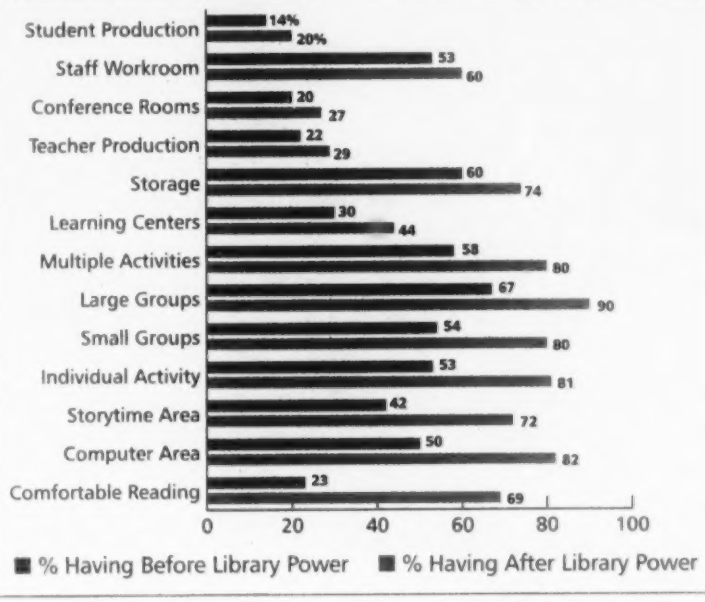
Facilities Refurbishing

When the program began, many school libraries, in places where they existed, were in poor physical condition. To address this problem, Library Power grants covered the cost of materials for

Key Finding: Library Power enabled schools to refurbish their libraries so that they could accommodate more users and different kinds of activities all at the same time, such as individual reading, groups working together and students doing research on computers. Libraries became more cheerful and welcoming places, encouraging students and teachers to visit more often.

Figure 1:
Types of Spaces Available in the Library Media Center Before and After Library Power

Librarian Survey, 1997: Total Responding: 446



renovations, and school districts supplied the labor. This combination resulted in dramatic improvements in library facilities throughout the country (See Figure 1).

Renovations accommodated multiple uses of library facilities. For example, by simply adding more seats, a change that occurred in nearly half the participating schools, work spaces for students increased ten percent across all the sites. Space for comfortable quiet reading increased threefold. Other changes included expanding space to allow for computer access, story time and individual and group activities. Libraries became more cheerful and welcoming places for multiple activities, encouraging both teachers and students to visit more often.

■ There were rickety tables and no rug. There were some raggedy cushions and almost no books. When we were little, we had to just stay in our classrooms with baby books or go across the street to the public library. Now we have new books, new chairs, and the walls have been painted. The library has a new name, "Fishing for Knowledge."
(Fifth grade student, Library Power School)

■ The old library was not tied to the curriculum in any way. You went to the library to check out a book. Period. Now students go when they need to find information about what they are studying in class. (Principal, Library Power school)

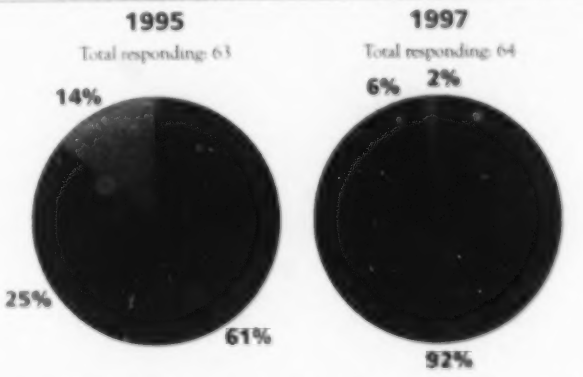
The effects on library use that followed from making physical improvements illustrate how Library Power worked as a collection of practices reinforcing one another. As teachers became drawn to visiting and using the library with their students, they began adopting other Library Power practices. The addition of more tables and chairs allowed students to use the library in more diverse ways at the same time. In turn, space that could accommodate a variety of activities made it easier to implement flexible scheduling, which further expanded students' access to library resources.

Flexible Scheduling

Before Library Power began, most schools limited access to the library to fixed schedules, a practice often better suited to the habits of librarians and teachers than to student needs. Typically, students visited the library as a class at predetermined times – usually once a week. Students who needed library materials at any other time often had to wait until the next scheduled visit.

Library Power changed all that. A major premise of the program was that students would benefit by having access to resources and facilities that support instruction at the time most suitable to the lesson or when they spontaneously expressed interest in a topic. The move to encourage students to visit the library when they needed materials for classroom learning brought school libraries alive. Case study researchers in virtually all the schools observed students moving freely in and out of the library, using reference materials, asking for assistance from the librarian, working in groups, reading on their own

Figure 2:
Scheduling in Library Media Centers in Library Power Schools*
(Matched Librarian Surveys, Round Three Only, 1995 & 1997)



*Source: Matched surveys from librarians entering the program in the 1994-1995 school year who were surveyed in Spring 1995 and Spring 1997.

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in cozy nooks and bean bag chairs, and checking out books as needed. In surveys, teachers confirmed that students increasingly used the library on their own initiative.

Key Finding: *Implementing a flexible schedule to allow students to visit the library whenever they needed to throughout the day instead of limiting use to regularly scheduled periods resulted in more frequent visits to the library.*

Survey data from schools that began their three-year Library Power project in the 1994-1995 school year showed dramatic differences in how access to the library was provided. At the end of the first year of the project, 61% of the libraries allowed fully flexible access; by the end of three years, 92% of the schools had fully flexible schedules (See Figure 2).

Over the course of the program, some form of flexible scheduling became a permanent routine in many schools. Survey data gathered from schools one year after their funding ended indicated that in 97% of the schools, flexible scheduling was still either fully or partially part of the school routine. This figure provides a sharp contrast to SASS data from 1993-1994, which indicate that nationally 44% of school libraries operated on some form of flexible schedules and only 17% operated on full flexible schedules.

More important, these changes led to students' using the library more frequently. One year after the program's end, the average student in a Library Power school visited the library one and a half times a week. This can be compared to the expected average of one visit per week in schools with rigid scheduling or the observed average for schools nationally in 1993-94 of .83 visits per week. Teachers' observations confirm the counts made in Library Power libraries. The majority of teachers report that their students are using the library more (65%), are using it more on their own initiative (60%), and have a more positive attitude toward using the library (72%).

Given varying conditions within sites, individual schools moved away from fixed schedules in different ways. Some librarians retained a fixed weekly checkout period, while also encouraging students to tap into library resources on their own or in small groups when needed. Other librarians continued to instruct whole classes in library skills and also took the opportunity to help students apply those skills when they dropped into the library for help on specific assignments. Creative compromise between innovation and tradition was a hallmark of scheduling practices in many Library Power schools.

Collaborative Planning

During Library Power, librarians did not work in isolation to renew collections, refurbish facilities or establish more flexible scheduling practices. Rather, they collaborated closely with teachers to plan how to implement these core practices and design new approaches to teaching and learning in their own schools.

■ Prior to Library Power, the librarian was not a participant in the creation of instructional units. This has evolved to a nice collaboration between all parties. (Principal, Library Power school)

In places where teachers were already involved in shared decision-making, Library Power strengthened that process by including school librarians. Before their Library Power project began, the average librarian collaborated with 22% of the teachers in the school; in 1997, the average librarian was collaborating with 55% of the teachers in the building. Teachers confirmed this interaction.

Over half of the teachers said that they collaborated with the librarian in the planning and design of instruction, and 37% said that they collaborated with the librarian in delivering instruction.

During the project period, teachers and librarians used collaborative planning activities to focus on developing collections, identifying and gathering materials for specific units of study, and helping students create projects. In some schools, teachers and librarians also used shared planning time to develop common instructional goals. In these schools, librarians began to teach research and information literacy skills in the context of specific assignments rather than as part of a preordained curriculum. A relatively small number of librarians and teachers worked together on evaluating student performance.

Key Finding: Throughout participating schools, librarians and teachers collaborated on planning and designing instructional units, with librarians sometimes sharing responsibility for teaching.

■ Before, the school librarians were the weakest link in the entire library structure in this community. Now we see them at the front end of the curriculum. We see a different, more profound understanding among librarians about the type of role they play. This shows me that the Library Power training has had an impact over time on the knowledge and framework of the librarians. (Community college librarian, Library Power site)

Survey data, collaboration logs, and case study observations revealed varying degrees of collaboration from school to school. Most collaboration was grounded in two domains. First, working with a shared awareness of instructional goals and curriculum, teachers and librarians collaborated to identify resources to enrich that curriculum. Collection development provided both the first reason for collaboration between most librarians and teachers, and the basis for most collaboration between the two.

Second, teachers and librarians worked separately, with the teacher in the classroom and the librarian in the library, to help students meet teacher-developed assignments. Approximately 20% of schools' collaborative activities involved teachers and librarians dividing responsibilities for planning and delivering instructional activities in one location, such as the library. Deeper levels of collaboration that resulted in teachers and librarians assuming equally shared responsibility for all students' learning proved more difficult to realize.

At first, teachers in many schools were skeptical about collaborating with the librarian and did not see what the librarian had to offer them. However, as Library Power practices began to take hold, increasing numbers began to see

the librarian as a colleague who shared their vision for improved learning. When this occurred, the new professional relationships Library Power fostered became the basis for a school culture focused on student learning.

Professional Development

Across all Library Power sites, professional development was the linchpin that held together the core practices and bolstered schools' capacity to make use of those practices. In fact, Library Power sites judged professional development to be so important that each site, on average, spent 26% of its $1.2 million grant – about $308,000 over three years – for professional development activities. In many districts, this funding enabled the library to be the focus of professional development for the first time.

Working together, and with the assistance of the American Library Association and the Public Education Network, sites developed a multifaceted approach to professional development. While the mix of activities varied from district to district, this approach typically involved:

- Developing knowledge and understanding of state-of-the-art library practice through conferences, summer institutes and workshops with expert practitioners;
- Fostering new skills through site leaders providing in-school coaching, mentoring and pairing of experienced librarians with novice practitioners;
- Encouraging new attitudes toward risk-taking and student learning by modeling of successful strategies through presentations and school visits;
- Building collegial relationships and professional learning communities through networking and professional problem-solving among librarians, principals and school-based Library Power teams, both within and outside the districts.

Given Library Power's commitment to collaboration, many professional development activities focused on helping teams of teachers, principals and parents develop the skills needed to work together to implement the core practices. Program leaders called on complex strategies to design activities to meet the varying needs of librarians, principals and teachers. For example, because schools joined the program at different times, district leadership often "rolled out" professional development at different levels for different participants. Thus, while some activities introduced new staff to core practices for the first time, others focused on helping more experienced educators hone their skills to higher levels of competence.

> ***Key Finding:*** *Schools invested in professional development activities that taught principals, teachers and librarians how to integrate library and other information resources into teaching and learning.*

School librarians benefited considerably from many of these professional development activities, and some emerged as instructional leaders in their own schools. Using their newly acquired skills and status, librarians convened teachers for collaborative conversations that served as the basis for more collegial and professional school cultures. As facilitators of these discussions, librarians served as advocates for the use of core library practices to improve teaching and learning and to develop a stronger professional community. ■

IV. Library Power's Contributions to Teaching and Learning

From the beginning, the goals of Library Power included making the library and its resources integral to teaching and learning. Library Power anticipated that the adoption of the core practices would connect each school's library and librarian with its instructional mission. In that context, librarians could work as teachers and information specialists to coach students as they executed assignments designed through a collaborative planning process.

Key Finding: Changes fostered by Library Power helped schools engage students in meaningful and educationally rich learning activities. Instead of being limited to classroom lectures and textbook assignments, by using library resources-books, CD ROMs, and the internet, students were able to explore topics in more depth.

Over the study period, the national evaluation examined the ways in which Library Power's resources and practices affected assignments, instruction and opportunities to learn. Researchers asked: Under what circumstances did Library Power work best to generate better curriculum? Did teachers make use of Library Power to improve instruction? Could schools weave together Library Power core practices to support ambitious instructional reforms? In what ways did Library Power foster a stronger professional culture among teachers and librarians? Among their findings:

> ■ All the children are ours, not just my class and your class. As we collaborate, we share ideas that spark a synergy. We feed off each other. I feel Library Power has drawn many of our teachers together. (Teacher, Library Power school)

■ *Library Power and Curriculum*

Core Library Power practices contributed to developing a shared curriculum and broadening opportunities to learn in participating schools. More students using better-stocked libraries more often each week showed that teachers were creating assignments that required library learning. Using updated library materials, many teachers expanded the curriculum to include assignments that focused students on using reading, research and critical information skills. In some schools, students in the earliest elementary grades tackled research assignments, and teachers began to ask students to examine multiple resources beyond the textbook to compare and contrast points of view on study questions.

Case studies and survey data together confirmed that Library Power contributed to a broader awareness of the intended and implemented curriculum among librarians and teachers.

Collaborative planning and curriculum mapping provided faculties with an overview of what teachers in all grades were teaching. Armed with knowledge of the "big picture," librarians and teachers could analyze curriculum, identify gaps, eliminate outdated content and develop curriculum units that added rather than repeated content as students moved from grade to grade. The process of curriculum

analysis also resulted in new ways of packaging materials for easier access and use. For example, new materials, organized around thematic topics, boxed in tubs and circulated from classroom to classroom, involved more students in interdisciplinary units of study.

■ *Library Power and Instruction*

Throughout the participating sites, Library Power also stimulated instructional change, which was modest in some places and more ambitious in others. Many teachers reported redesigning at least some of their instruction to capitalize on the new resources Library Power provided. With a richer selection of materials available, teachers drew students into what is known as "resource-based" learning, often around a theme that teachers across a single grade selected in collaboration with the librarian. As one teacher explained, "Having more materials in the collection has made it easier to do independent projects with my students."

Teachers' use of Library Power to engage students in more complex kinds of thinking provided existence proof of the program's potential to influence instruction. Case studies showed that Library Power changed some teachers' expectations about the kind of research younger students could do, and that teachers involved more students in library work, often for the first time. Library Power was a natural partner for instructional programs emphasizing interdisciplinary instruction, project-based lessons and student inquiry that require using a variety of materials to devise solutions to problems.

For example:

- Sixth graders studying the Civil War used various kinds of information to inquire into the key events of the war. Students delved into factual questions and also analyzed and interpreted information, developed timelines, graphed casualties, wrote poems and presented dramatic readings based on historical events.
- Elementary students used library resources to describe what was already known about a specific topic in science, then developed an experiment and wrote up results in a form acceptable for the local science fair, using concepts of "constants" and "independent and dependent variables."
- Inspired by a Library Power summer institute, one fifth grade teacher worked with the school librarian, public librarians and other teachers on her team to help students use original sources to conduct primary research for a study of their neighborhood.

Case studies highlighted a variety of ways in which Library Power's practice of collaborative planning encouraged professional relationships that, in turn, strengthened schools' capacity for changing instruction. These studies revealed that teaching changes were most profound in schools where teachers shared an instructional philosophy that was aligned with Library Power's vision of more ambitious learning. However, on its own, the program did not bring about widespread changes in teaching. In schools with a less compatible instructional focus, a better equipped and functioning library offered a new setting for students to gather facts from reference sources, take notes and respond to predetermined questions on a topic, but these assignments did not always engage students in deeper thinking about a topic.

■ *Library Power and a Collegial Professional Culture*

One premise of Library Power is that student learning is likely to improve when teachers are engaged in professional conversations that establish shared goals for student learning. Where teachers share goals for more ambitious student learning, they are better equipped to mobilize their resources to help students produce work that demonstrates learning of high intellectual quality. When teachers talk together about instruction, they are also in a better position to help one another achieve shared goals.

The initiative's major strategy for promoting a collegial culture in participating schools was collaborative planning between teachers and the librarian. Over the years of the initiative, Library Power enhanced collaboration for instruction between librarians and teachers and among teachers themselves. Evidence came from librarians that they more than doubled the proportion of teachers with whom they actively collaborated. Half of the teachers reported that they work with the librarian on the planning and design of instruction, and almost half say that Library Power has increased their amount of collaboration. The majority of principals attribute collaboration in planning instructional units and in developing collections to Library Power.

Case studies showed that collaboration was most effective when teachers had already done some planning specifically aimed at improving learning objectives or thematic units. For these teachers, Library Power provided the rationale for including librarians in teachers' conversations. New resources enticed teachers to plan for curriculum that made use of new materials and strategies learned through professional development.

Collaboration was more difficult when, despite the librarian's efforts, teachers persisted in viewing the library as a service to support traditional instruction rather than a resource for instructional change. In these situations, when it came to collaborating for new curriculum and instruction, areas usually reserved to teachers, many teachers kept the librarian at arm's distance.

V. Lessons for Lasting Change: What Matters Most

Library Power's core practices reinforced one another to establish stronger professional relationships and routines that set the stage for more ambitious teaching and learning. With better materials available, teachers experimented with assignments that pushed students to use sources beyond standard textbooks. In many schools, teachers began for the first time to employ literature-based strategies for improving students' reading and writing. One year after the program's end, almost three-quarters of teachers surveyed described students' attitude toward library use as more positive than prior to Library Power. As one fourth grade teacher in a Library Power school reflected, "[Students] are more curious, they ask questions, they're more interested, they want to know more.... They want to go do research, they want to go to the library five times a week."

Still, aware that program changes can erode over time, the evaluation team asked further questions: Under what conditions would schools and districts sustain progress? What were the chances that Library Power's core practices and strategies would become part of the regular routines of the districts and schools?

Library Power's "lessons learned" offer both hope and caution for those seeking to make innovations in teaching and learning part of normal school operations. Overall the evaluation underscored that faithful adoption of all core practices along with widespread acceptance of these practices in a school boost the chances that schools will institute library reforms. Two years after the end of the funding period, the great majority of schools persisted in using flexible scheduling and collaboration at levels that indicated Library Power was being institutionalized in school cultures, structures and relationships.

What fosters institutionalization of these practices? New and sustained funding, support from outside the schools, leadership, staff development and a positive professional culture, and a compatible policy context favored the chances that Library Power would become the basis for "the way we do things around here." The varying degrees to which these conditions were in place in different districts highlighted the promises and tensions educators encountered in applying Library Power as a strategy for lasting school improvement. Here is a summary of the key lessons:

Key Finding: The experience of participating schools shows that faithful adoption of all core Library Power practices, along with widespread acceptance of these practices, boost the chances that library reforms can become permanent.

■ New and Sustained Funding Matters

The infusion of new resources into Library Power schools was critical to their adopting the five core practices and stimulating new approaches to teaching and learning. For example, refurbishing antiquated facilities helped win over skeptical teachers and sparked their thinking about how their students

■ You hate to say money is everything, but in some situations, you really do have to have new books. They really weren't extras; they were making up for years of neglect. (Librarian, Library Power school)

could make better use of the library. As one Library Power director noted, "The renovation seemed to catalyze an acceptance and appreciation of the change in the program."

Funding was essential to replace pre-Sputnik era materials with attractive biographies, picture books and fiction from diverse cultural traditions. Up-to-date books drew more students into school libraries, and in the final months of the study period, almost two-thirds (64%) of teachers surveyed cited the expanded collections as the most important contribution of Library Power to their teaching.

Librarians used new resources to initiate collaborative planning and stimulate changes in collegial relationships. Even small amounts of funding enhanced professional collaboration. For example, in one school, five mini-grants totaling $4,200 supported 18 teachers and the librarian in planning for enriched units of instruction and stimulated teacher study groups on such topics as assessment, writing across the curriculum, multiple intelligences and multiage grouping. Several groups established a consensus enabling them to develop new assessment standards and create new curriculum.

At the end of the funding period, some schools faced threats to continued funding posed by local property tax caps and the redirecting of scarce resources for textbooks rather than library books. In this context, maintaining the momentum toward a higher quality collection posed a special challenge.

As one librarian pointed out, "Other things we can continue without money – collaborative planning, thematic units, flexible scheduling – but you can't keep your collection current without money."

■ *Outside Support Matters*

Maintaining ongoing funding for Library Power is closely tied with mobilizing community support for the kind of schooling supported by the initiative. Over the course of the program, schools established partnerships with a variety of entities from outside their own walls to buttress the core practices. Overall help came in the form of technical assistance from national organizations like the ALA's American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the Public Education Network. Local business groups provided additional monetary and programmatic support. Parents acted as "watchdogs" for the project, and librarians affiliated with public and university libraries offered connections to a wider professional community. As one Library Power site director emphasized, "The more people who know about [the Library Power project] and the more people who buy into it, the more likely it will be successful."

Most important, local education funds, community-based organizations that represent important segments of the larger community, were critical to building acceptance and support for Library Power. These groups performed a key service as a conduit for funding and volunteers, as an outside

■ The resource people helped us plan.... Making available those resources to us, having someone from outside this school help us plan for the future, what a library should look like and what a library should be doing, was immeasurable [help]. (Principal, Library Power school)

"change agent" pushing for core practices and as a vehicle for developing public understanding of the goals of the initiative. To the extent that communities, especially through their local education funds, continue to demand that schools offer the practices and resources associated with Library Power, its chances for becoming institutionalized improve.

> ■ It doesn't always have to be the administrator [who leads change]. I think that is a fallacy we have. I think leadership can [also] emerge from that four-member team as long as the administrator is supportive and does not shoot it down. I know where librarians have taken leadership roles and teachers have taken the leadership role. (District Library Power director)

■ *Leadership Matters*

Systemic leadership aligned at all levels was an essential element for advancing and sustaining Library Power. At each stage of the program's development, leaders from the local education funds along with leaders from each school district acted jointly to put core practices into place. This partnership enhanced the program's chances for becoming institutionalized.

In the community, local education fund leaders designed and administered the program district wide. Library Power directors at the local education funds wrote funding proposals, developed community engagement efforts, orchestrated meetings of librarians across each district, and implemented mini-grant programs for professional collaboration for new curriculum and instruction. They also worked with staff from inside the school district to integrate Library Power's staff development program with professional development activities connected to other initiatives.

At the school level, principals' leadership made a difference. Because professional collaboration depended on teachers having time to meet together with the librarian on a regular basis, many principals took steps to ensure that the school's schedule accommodated this purpose. Some administrators also held teachers and librarians directly accountable for collaborating with one another. For example, one principal in a case study school required teachers to document at least three projects planned with the librarian. In this instance, teachers' use of the library in their instruction increased.

The challenge of promoting widespread and consistent leadership among principals, teachers and librarians remains an issue of considerable concern. In some case study schools, principal turnover resulted in the program's losing ground. However, the evaluation also found that schools in districts that had made a district-wide commitment to Library Power had less difficulty sustaining the program even in the face of leadership changes.

■ *Professional Development and a Positive Professional Culture Matter*

Professional development was critical to Library Power's success in introducing librarians, teachers and principals to state-of-the-art library practices. Workshops, mentoring, school visits and networking all equipped librarians to encourage teachers to use the core practices to benefit students' learning. With new knowledge and skills, many librarians emerged as instructional leaders in their own right. As one principal from a case study school

■ Staff development caused more change than anything else we did. (District Library Power director.)

noted: "Library Power has helped focus the role of the librarian as central to school reform. It brought libraries directly into the middle of total school reform and created a legitimate role for the librarian as an instructional leader. In some schools, the librarian is now perceived more as an instructional leader than the principal."

Sustaining Library Power's positive effects also requires that teachers and librarians share a positive professional culture grounded in a common vision. To varying degrees, Library Power schools developed such a culture, primarily through collaborative planning. Teachers in schools connected to a larger reform framework that promoted a vision of learning compatible with Library Power were often most willing to collaborate around shared instructional goals and activities.

Key Finding: To the extent that other states, or even individual districts, implement similar policies, the goals of Library Power will be enhanced at the school level, and institutionalization is more likely.

■ *Compatible Policies Matter*

Policies that flowed from national, state and local agencies had notable effects on schools' acceptance of Library Power's aims and practices. When state or district policies were compatible with Library Power goals, principals and teachers in participating schools more readily understood and endorsed the purposes of Library Power. In this context, Library Power could add value to existing reform efforts. Without such a context, it was more difficult for educators to "make sense" of Library Power and embrace its purposes and practices as part of their daily routines.

Where prevailing policy goals paralleled the aims of Library Power and promoted student inquiry and problem-solving, schools and teachers were encouraged to use Library Power's tools and strategies to help students reach higher levels of achievement.

For example, assessments in effect during the period of the project in Kentucky reinforced the goals of Library Power and provided a rationale for Kentucky teachers to embrace Library Power practices. Likewise, teachers in schools affiliated with broader school reform networks that shared Library Power's vision of student learning through understanding, made better use of core Library Power practices, including collaborative planning, than did teachers in other schools.

In contrast, where policies were less aligned with Library Power, the program sometimes floundered. For example, New Jersey's elimination of funding specifically allotted to school libraries left districts with the choice of using block grant funding to continue Library Power practices or pursuing competitive funding sources. This choice meant pitting the goals of school library reform against the goals of other equally legitimate programs and services, including those of school counselors and nurses. Ultimately, this left Library Power vulnerable to local political wrangling. ■

VI. Library Power and Dilemmas of Reform

The evaluation of Library Power highlighted what schools could achieve by mobilizing resources, leadership and a strategy for improvement that put libraries at the center of teaching and learning and moved librarians into the mainstream of school life. These achievements were considerable.

At the same time, the evaluation, and the case studies in particular, also revealed dilemmas that have vexed other school reform initiatives. At the end of the study period, unresolved questions remain regarding how Library Power's vision of learning can weather systemic problems associated with competing demands on schools, the underdeveloped capacity in some schools to enhance the intellectual quality of teaching and learning, and unequal resources and access to knowledge within and across schools. Here is a summary of key findings:

■ *Competing Demands*

While Library Power held out the promise of better use of learning resources, more focused curriculum, challenging instruction and deeper student learning, other demands competed with this momentum. A few schools were consistently distracted by the social needs of their students, and the lack of resources available to address those needs. Some schools also contended with the political pressure to raise test scores and "look good" on statewide or district assessments. This pressure inhibited some teachers from moving toward new kinds of instruction aimed at helping students learn to research questions of interest as a way to develop new knowledge and understanding. These demands potentially represent a powerful undertow that could make it difficult for Library Power to realize its full potential.

■ *Varying Capacity for Improving Teaching and Learning*

School reform involves changing more than school structures and procedures. It also requires creating a culture based on shared norms, values and expectations that support improved student learning. Developing such a culture requires that professionals develop collegial relationships based on trust and respect.

Schools were not always receptive to the vision of student learning and professional practice espoused by Library Power. Although Library Power stimulated momentum for stronger professional collaboration in many schools, and although it offered schools a set of tools that set the stage for richer classroom practice, it could not, by itself, advance a vision of students working at high intellectual levels and teachers engaged in collegial practice to promote student achievement. When other enabling conditions were not in place, schools struggled to connect Library Power's core practices to improved teaching and learning.

Across participating districts, schools varied considerably in their capacity to use Library Power's resources and practices, especially collaborative planning, to realize a vision for higher student achievement. Some schools had a critical mass of teachers who could develop a schoolwide culture focused on resource-based learning. Teacher beliefs and assumptions about student learning and the appropriate role of the library sometimes supported and sometimes undermined teachers' acceptance of collaborative planning for assignments that made new intellectual demands on students. Leadership changes or a leadership unable to develop the trust and respect necessary for collegial practice has the potential to further undermine such collaboration.

■ *Equity*

While Library Power helped address inequities in resources from school to school, inequalities in resources and capacity of schools to mobilize for reform remained an issue throughout the study period.

In some instances, existing inequalities in resources contributed to differences in implementation of the core practices from school to school. For example, schools that had already allocated more support staff to the library were also those most likely to implement new scheduling practices; in fact, libraries with fully flexible access had over four times the full-time equivalent in time commitments from support staff as did those that maintained access on a regular basis.

Schools profiled in the evaluation's case studies also varied in teaching capacity, and in the context of existing disparities, Library Power introduced another opportunity to widen the gap in students' learning opportunities. For those teachers ready to invent more challenging assignments, Library Power increased their skills and confidence for doing so, enhancing their students' opportunities to learn.

Teachers in schools that had already embraced substantive school reform initiatives, viewed Library Power as adding value to their work, and they also found they could use Library Power to enhance instruction. Teachers in schools without affiliations to reform networks or in schools with limited capacity overall could less readily employ Library Power practices to improve classroom practice.

Whether in terms of professional community, financial resources or instructional quality, teachers and students in schools with greater resources to begin with were those most likely to benefit from the expanded resources and opportunities for learning, available through Library Power. These evaluation findings suggest that schools and districts seeking to adopt Library Power must consider ways to design an implementation plan that addresses existing disparities.

VII. Summary

Library Power aimed to move library resources and practices into the mainstream of school life so as to expand enriching learning opportunities to *all* students schoolwide. It sought to marry the work of school librarians to the work of teachers, so librarians and teachers together would use new library resources to enhance student learning and support a more positive community for collegial practice. As librarians, teachers, principals and change agents in the local education funds put the core practices to work, most Library Power schools realized these goals.

In the beginning, neither the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund nor reformers in the districts anticipated that the program's practices and strategies could evolve into a strategy for comprehensive school reform. But as the national evaluation learned, in some schools under certain conditions, Library Power was a powerful catalyst for reforming teaching, learning and a school's professional culture. The tools and practices of the program stimulated and broadened the scope of student reading, triggered new research projects and accelerated the acceptance of new visions of learning for understanding.

Putting Library Power practices into place in some of the poorest schools in the nation, librarians, teachers and principals together helped students learn more substantive content and sharpened their own professional practice.

Library Power did not solve existing problems that plague urban and low-income districts. It did not provide answers to all the dilemmas schools encounter as they educate large numbers of disadvantaged children with limited resources. But the Library Power story reveals the potential for school library reform to leverage important improvements in classroom practice and professional relationships. It highlights the conditions that can foster or impede the acceptance of new practices, and it demonstrates how schools can effectively use library resources and practices to promote a shared curriculum and contribute powerfully to improve instruction.

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